

5-1-2011

A Knight of Fashion: Costuming an Amateur Musical

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A Knight of Fashion: Costuming an Amateur Musical

By

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An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for Graduation from the
Western Oregon University Honors Program

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May 2011

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Acknowledgements

Theatre is always a collaborative process, and so also, it seems, was my thesis. Even though it is my name on the cover page of this document, it is really thanks to all the people around me that this project was accomplished. I would have never had the inspiration to begin, or the perseverance to finish, had it not been for these people. First, I want to thank Crystal Hanson and Alysse Parker for collaborating on the musical with me, and for giving me the opportunity to make something fun out of a daunting task. Thanks are also required to Dr. Gavin Keulks, director of the Honors Program, Prof. Diane Tarter, my advisor, and Jeanne Rockwell-Kincannon, the most helpful librarian, for being there to guide me when I forgot that the project was supposed to be fun. And last, but certainly not least, I want to thank my wonderful family and my awesome roommates for listening to me complain and giving me both constructive and silly suggestions when I needed them.

Preface

While costumes seem to be the backdrop for the more important aspects of theatre, in reality, they can make or break a show. Costumes are one of the many under-credited features of a production. They demand careful design and exact attention, but they must also be made to look as though they arrived naturally and unintentionally. This is the paradox that costumers are faced with, and this is the challenge I chose to tackle as my senior thesis for the Honors Program.

Since I undertook a creative thesis, most of my energy was directed toward creating the actual designs. Nonetheless, to produce quality designs, it was crucial to spend a considerable amount of time researching the time period and becoming acquainted with the script itself, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: The Musical!* Armed with a thorough knowledge of both the historical restraints and the dramatic restraints, I was able to design the garments satisfactorily.

I also incorporated an additional challenge to the process by collaborating on a production with two other seniors in the Honors Program at Western Oregon. Alysse Parker wrote the script to our musical for her thesis, and Crystal Hanson composed the music and lyrics. This made my task of costuming more challenging and interesting due to the fact that I was able to work directly with the writers, and that the libretto I was basing my designs on was still unrefined and untested.

While a musical is comprised of a story, music, acting and costumes, none of these aspects can be created independently from each other. They are all parts of one whole: the show, and therefore they must be crafted so that they work together seamlessly. A musical is a work of art, and as such it demands that the artist(s) put

thought into every detail to create one cohesive piece (Lambourne 1953). A show can be destroyed by one simple element that does not adhere to the spirit of the play. With a well-crafted show, the audience floats through the story understanding the emotions and themes intuitively. This idea of losing oneself in a show is called the suspension of disbelief; however, all it takes is one ill-designed element to shatter that suspension and bring the audience back to reality. Therefore, each element must be carefully designed and just as carefully woven into the show. Costume design is simply one of the many elements which can make or break a production. I have been to countless plays and musicals in my life and I know how disappointing it is to watch bad costumes. It detracts from the show every second that they are onstage.

Designing costumes is much more than simply finding clothes for actors to wear. The costumes have to highlight the characters' qualities and personalities, be historically appropriate, and mesh with the design of the rest of the show. To accomplish this, it is crucial to read the play first. This way the costume designer can not only understand the limitations and guidelines for the designs, but also can feel the mood of the play and see the overall picture it creates. For *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, I read both the script written by my co-director, Alysse Parker, and also the Jessie L. Weston translation of the story that the script was modeled after. From these two documents, I created a script analysis (located in the appendix), which is basically a costumer's map of the script. It contains information about the play, such as which characters are in what scene, the basic design ideas for each character, how many costumes each will need, what challenges will need to be addressed and every direct mention of a costume in the script. This process insures that my designs remain

consistent with the logistics and the themes of the show. From these guidelines, I created my preliminary designs, checked them against my notes and critiqued them as a whole. After that, I drew my final pencil sketches, which included characteristic poses, accessories, and finer details such as trim. The last step was to choose the colors, textures and create the actual painted renderings. These paintings were done in gouache on watercolor paper.

History

For a historical piece, research is essential. However, with a comedy show like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, it is equally important to know when to incorporate anachronism and historical generalizations. As stated earlier, theater is an art form, not a history class. For *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the only essential goal was to convey a good sense of the time period, not to remain strictly accurate. While my costumes do not follow the historical criteria exactly, it is still important to thoroughly understand the historical view. This way, I not only know what general styles to use, but also which social rules would be the best to break. For example, the principle character travels back in time, and while he wears historical clothing he has not yet learned how to behave in the time period. His costume design is a “dumbed down” version of authentic medieval garb that fits his character’s idea of how the era would look. As far as construction goes, historical accuracy is only important on the surface. Costumes need to be easy to wear while maintaining the look of the period; they are not accurate representations of historical garb (Lambourne 1953). Instead of installing authentic fastening such as laces and buttons on costume pieces, costumers use zippers and velcro

to make the costumes more practical. Instead of having the actors wear all the required layers, costumers sew them together into one, functional garment.

The stories of King Arthur are often imagined to have taken place in the early Renaissance period. However, historically, the legends of King Arthur stemmed from the 5th and 6th Centuries. I chose to costume my show in the 11th and 12th Centuries, or the Romanesque Period, as a compromise between the two. While it is more accurate to design Arthur's court in the earlier time period, the audiences expect King Arthur to be set later than that. By choosing a period between the conflicting eras, I tried to reconcile two different concepts of King Arthur's court. Moreover, due to the fact that there are few resources that give descriptions of historical garb as early as the Medieval era, I



Figure a

gave myself the span of two hundred years from which to draw inspiration and information.

Several aspects effect fashion in every period: modesty requirements, rank, practical clothing preferences and, of course, the fashion trends of the day. In the Medieval period, it was important to be frugal with fabric and many garments were created out of simple rectangles so that yardage was not wasted (Delort 1972). Also, in this way, fabric could be reused to make something else if the need arose. People had fewer clothes in this time; therefore, more time was spent constructing each garment, and they were made

to be versatile and durable (Delort 1972). They sewed elaborate trims and gems on to

their clothes to make them unique, and used layering and belts to make their garments versatile (Truman 1936). In general, men and women of this era wore similar outfits, including two tunics, one with a wider decorative sleeve and one with a close fitting long sleeve, a mantle (what we think of as a cloak), and a belt. Men wore knee-length tunics with hose (close-fitting pants); women wore longer tunics that touched the floor, sometimes including a small train, and if they were married, they were required to wear a wimple (a veil that covers the hair), at all times (Dabney 1930, Bradley 1954).

To better understand the period I not only researched, but also recreated a historically accurate woman's under and over tunic and mantle to give me a sense of how the attire went together, and how the garments worked as clothing. I was



Figure b

astonished by the quantity of fabric used to create these garments and also how heavy they were when completed. Nonetheless, they are extremely comfortable to wear. The use of excessive fabric would have made repairs easier and also would have kept the wearer warm in the cold English climate. The princess line dress, the style of women's tunic, is extremely flattering to the female body. Laces also allowed for the garment to be adjusted to person's body shape easily.

Process

As stated earlier, I began my design process by creating a script analysis. In it I worked out the logistics of the production and located pertinent ideas and themes that I wanted my costumes to highlight. I found two interesting themes in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* that I especially wanted to amplify in my designs: a) the idea of merging the Medieval and the modern worlds and b) the power of the women in the era. The story seems to indicate that the modern and the Medieval periods were not as different as people imagine. I wanted to mix the two periods so that Sam could feel at home in the Medieval world, and so could the audience. This was accomplished by mimicking elements from each world in the other, and by making the old components look new (and vice versa). The goal was to give the whole show a timeless effect. Also, contrary to the traditional roles of women in Medieval times, the women in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are very in control and powerful. I designed my women to look commanding by using stronger colors and by giving women manly garments such as shorter tunics or unveiled heads.

I was also faced with the question of how many costumes each character should wear. While approximately eight days elapse in the play, the performance is only a little over an hour. Not only would numerous costume changes be impractical, they would also be confusing and disruptive for the audience. So, for the sake of clarity, I have decided to give each character just one or two outfits. Not only does this work well with the overall simplicity of the show, but it also makes sense historically because Medieval people would not have had many garment options (Delort 1972).

Characters

In these next sections, I will briefly explain each of my designs. This analysis will include the guidelines provided by the script and book, and then an explanation of my design choices.

Sir Gawain



Figure c



Figure d

Sir Gawain is both the title role of the show, and also one of two main characters. He and his co-star, Sam, are not only related but they are also, as mentioned in the script, uncannily similar: “Who is this? (*Picks up a fake TV guide*) Samuel... Lothian... hmmm... he reminds me of someone... ... oh yes, Gawain Lothian... those fools,” therefore, their outfits are almost the inverse of each other's. They use the same

colors, but in different locations, thus showing their connection while retaining their own individuality. Moreover, they have the same white shirt and brown pants. Gawain, however, is older than Sam, which I displayed by giving him a large cloak and weapons. I also gave Gawain a tunic that looks less strictly Medieval to show his similarity to modern people, while Sam is dressed in a more authentic robe, to show that he is more similar to the Medieval era. They both compromise on their own time period.

Gawain is also the nephew of Morgan le Fay and King Arthur, so their family ties are represented by the use of the color red. In my designs red represents some connection to Morgan, either by being part of her bloodline or by harboring similar sentiments. Even though Gawain is a famed knight of the Round Table, he is not a very good one. Although he is armed and looks brave, he is also wearing yellow, which at that time symbolized cowardice. He is naïve and simple minded, so he is designed with soft edges and light colors.

The armor shown in the rendering would only be worn while Gawain was questing. In King Arthur's and Bertilak's court, he would remove the weapons, as a knight would have in that day and age. Also, for the seduction scenes, he would be wearing a simple shirt and pants, as nightclothes. These would be the same as the shirt and pants worn under his other costumes. In the Medieval times, people used their undergarments as pajamas, both because it is easier and because they did not have the resources to make separate attire for sleeping. This is especially true for Gawain, who has been traveling.

Samuel Lothian



Figure e



Figure f

I have already explained a lot about Sam in my description of Gawain; suffice to say that they are very similar. He also wears the red indicating that he is part of Morgan's family. He also has soft lines and light colors to show that he is not in control. Sam is designed to look similar to, but younger than, Gawain, and also similar to his modern self. Sam was transported, against his will, into the Medieval period from the present day. His modern clothes reflect the Medieval period by using the same colors, only brighter. His modern and Medieval outfits have mirror aspects, such as the cut off blue sleeve over white, the hood, and the lion symbol. The lion should look like a high school mascot in the modern world and change to a more rustic family emblem in the Medieval world. I have designed his Medieval costume to keep the skater shoes from

his present. This will remind the audience of his origins and set him apart from the rest of the cast.

In the play Sam's modern clothes are magically ripped by Morgan le Fay to reveal his Medieval clothes beneath, "*Morgan smiles, wiggles her fingers about, and rips off his modern clothing, under which is appropriate clothing for the time period.*" Therefore, the modern clothes will have to be sewn to each other, to create one garment that has velcro running down the sides, so that Morgan can accomplish this stunt.

Morgan le Fay



Figure g

Morgan is the driving force of the show. She is the most powerful, and she knows it; dangerous and magical, however at the same time, she is immature, self-centered, and playful. I dressed her entirely in red because she is not only part of Morgan's family—she is Morgan herself. She is obsessed with her family, which is why it is important to show the family ties. She uses her magic to mess with time, which means that she could have aspects of any era. However, Sam asks,

"Where are you from? The *Renaissance*

period?" which means that she should still retain an ancient feeling, even though she is timeless.

While she is a woman, she does not behave as a woman of the period would; she acts in control, which was traditionally the man's role. For this reason I dressed her in a short tunic, similar to the man's style, and left her head uncovered. The tall boots both make her masculine (only men wore boots), and also modern (they are heeled women's boots). The deep colors show her power, as do the sharp edges and the handkerchief hemline.

Lord Bertilak



Figure h

Bertilak is the lord of a nearby castle who leads a double life. As himself, he is a generous man who loves his wife, Lilith, and is more than happy to help a stranger. However, he is also the Green Knight and is in collaboration with Morgan le Fay, scheming to teach Gawain a lesson. He is the antagonist, in a way, since he is the one setting up problems for the leads. However, he is also kind and understanding, and he is only baiting Gawain to teach him a lesson.

He is calm, but powerful; therefore, he is

wearing dark colors, and he has a square style, which gives him a sense of solidity. The green colors are a subtle reminder of the Green Knight, to indicate that they are, indeed, the same person. The brown makes the audience think of a quintessential Medieval

man. Although he is acting on Morgan's behalf, he is mostly a free agent with power of his own; he is working with Morgan, not for her. Because of this, I decided to make him wear mostly his own colors, but with a red under tunic to indicate his relationship with Morgan. He will wear his weapons only when he goes hunting, which leaves him looking kinder at the beginning and more powerful while they are tricking Gawain.

The Green Knight



Figure i

The Green Knight is introduced as a new character; however, in the end, it is revealed that he and Lord Bertilak are the same person. He is described at the moment of his entrance by King Arthur: "Good sir, you are completely green, the color of the other-world, Avalon!" I took "completely green" a little liberally and made only his clothes and beard green. This keeps him from looking silly. It also makes him more similar to Lord Bertilak and makes his on-stage character-switch back to Lord

Bertilak easier. I also took the reference to "the other world" liberally. King Arthur says the other world is "Avalon," but I decided that to the people of the Medieval times, anything that did not look like themselves could be considered otherworldly. I decided to take two different ideas for the other world: the Orient and the modern time. The

English at this time used mostly chainmail as armor, but Asian cultures were using leather plate armor. I decided to use an angular leather breastplate with chainmail decorations. The helmet also looks more Greek than English, and the boots were modeled after modern day military combat boots. To fit in with the rest of the cast, he is also wearing a tunic, hose and mantle, but everything is sharper than the other characters. The biggest constraint with the costume is that the Green Knight is supposed to have his head chopped off and then put back on. All of the action takes place off stage, however, so it was not a design issue.

Lady Lilith



Figure j



Figure k

Lilith is Bertilak's wife and partner in crime. She is very traditionally feminine, doing all that her husband tells her. Nonetheless, her role of obedient wife is atypical,

because her husband and Morgan order her to seduce Gawain. Lilith is the epitome of beauty and femininity in this show. I chose a very traditional and flattering dress for her first appearance, as well as the traditional veil denoting her marital status. The ensemble is green to show her link to Bertilak, who is also the Green Knight. I also added red trim to link her to Morgan, for while she is in Morgan's plan, she is acting her part for Bertilak. Her lines are, for the most part, soft, however she also has a few sharp lines to show that she has some backbone, as well.

For the seduction scene, however, she has a character switch. She is now in red, which is both the color of passion, but also shows that she is now actively involved in Morgan's plan. The dress was described as "a sexy nightgown," which is a challenging task in the medieval period. I tried to compromise between modern lingerie and a Medieval gown. The dress mimics her other dress, but all the lines are sharper. Her hair is no longer covered, and she is wearing the long braids (traditionally made from fake hair) that were in high fashion for young women in the day.

Arthur



Figure 1

cloak over the full-length tunic makes him look very large. I made the cloak red to give the appearance of Father Christmas and also to remind the audience that he is Morgan's brother. The blue robe denotes the connection between Arthur, Gawain and Sam, as he is their uncle. Overall, Arthur has softer lines, because he is a gentle character, but rich colors to show that he is still powerful.

It is important, when designing, to remember that the audience already has an idea of what King Arthur looks like. In our play he is not only the King of England and the Head of the Round Table, but also a Santa-like character: jovial, fatherly and larger-than-life. While researching medieval garb, one of the most popular looks was a huge side cloak worn over everything. I did not want to use this for most characters because it does not lend itself to displaying character traits, but for King Arthur it was perfect. The full-length

Extras



Figure m



Figure n

There are a huge number of extras in this production when one counts the single line roles and the crowd fillers. For the scriptwriter it is no problem to add in obscure peasants who enter and say one line, but for the costumer, each tiny character requires costume design and construction. However, the design process is less involved due to the fact that these people have very little character development; there is no information on which to base a detailed design. In effect, it is simply a process of choosing appropriate outfits for each. In all, there are 16 extra parts, plus a chorus of 11 men, which totals 27 costumes in addition to the leads'. This seemed a bit excessive and labor-intensive for this project, so I decided to choose representative characters from different points in the show and design their costumes as an example for the rest.

I will give extremely brief explanations for their costumes. I will point out the major design intentions just to show how the ideas came to be. From left to right:

The person to the left is a member of Sir Bertilak's court and acts as a steward. The only description given is that she is androgynous and slightly arrogant. Therefore, all that was necessary was to insert aspects of both men's and women's outfits on the character. Guinevere is a famous figure, but in our musical she is a non-speaking role. I

gave her a classic Medieval noble woman's garments and made them mirror King Arthur to emphasize their connection.

The boy in King Arthur's court is representative of all the extras in the court scene. I put him in simple Medieval garb that could be easily changed from modern clothes. The extras have an extremely quick change, so I decided to have shorter tunics with pants that could be covered by modern pants and a sweatshirt of some kind.

The old man is reminiscent of a soothsayer from Shakespeare plays. I decided that the traditional loose robes would be best, however I added in a greenish tint due to the fact that he is in the Green Knight's territory and promoting the reputation of the Green Knight.

The modern girl is representative of all the flaws of modern life. I tried to give her typical 21st century clothes, but with an emphasis on the difference between women's clothing in the two periods. She is actually wearing clothes that are sort of similar to men's medieval garb, but feminized.

The man in the suit is actually a re-incarnation of King Arthur. He is a traveling salesman-type character, so I gave him a suit, with a red tie to unite him with Arthur.

The last figure is a representation of the entire choral group of men. They come in with no warning, overact and then leave. I gave them one simple tunic to put over typical men's singing group outfits: white t-shirts and black pants.

These characters' costumes can easily be changed to fit the resources available, unlike the designs for the key characters. The designs are more like guidelines for the extras; the few that were designed can act as guides for the other people's costumes.

Conclusion

Costuming is so much more than choosing clothes for characters; it's about contributing to a work of art and telling a story. Each color and shape involved in my designs was carefully chosen and thoughtfully placed. Even more than that, each design required an incorporation of historical, thematic and personality elements that needed to be researched and displayed. What with the collaborative aspect, the different elements that needed to be included, and the designer's interpretations and intentions, costume design is like a balancing act. Not only was it challenging to research and plan all of those aspects, it was also difficult to weave them all together in a pleasing manner.

I learned much more about costuming a show through this thesis than I ever would have by simply studying the process. After undertaking the task of costuming a show in its entirety, I have a new respect for the costumes I see in other productions and in movies. As an audience member, I forget the amount of work that is required to design good costumes. But it is that unawareness of the audience that we costumers strive for. It is for this reason that costuming a show is so difficult: it requires great effort, but the work spent designing must be hidden under a façade of spontaneity; the costumes must be so well designed that they do not look designed at all.

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Appendix
Plot Synopsis

Written by Crystal Hanson

Act I

Morgan Le Fay, infamous enchantress, is relaxing when she notices Sam, a descendant of hers, disgracing her name, just as her nephew Sir Gawain has been doing for years. She decides to take solve both their behavior problems at once, and sends Sam back in time (*Great Aunt*). Once there, Sam and Gawain become acquainted. The Green Knight appears and challenges King Arthur's court to deal him a blow, which he will reciprocate in a year (*The Green Knight's Challenge*). Sir Gawain accepts (*Gawain's Response*) and chops off the Green Knight's head. The Green Knight then puts his head back on and reminds Gawain to meet him in a year (*The Green Knight's Headless Challenge*). Fast-forwarding ahead, Sir Gawain and Sam embark on their search. They travel until Christmas Eve, when they reach Lord Bertilak's castle. Sam and Gawain are given lodging and meet Bertilak's wife, Lady Lilith. Gawain is instantly smitten. After Christmas Mass, Lilith and Bertilak meet back up to discuss Morgan Le Fay's plan to test Gawain's virtue and pledge their love to one another (*In Love and Hatred True*).

Act II

After breakfast, Gawain tells Bertilak of his search for the Green Knight, and Bertilak says he resides not two miles from the castle. Since Gawain still has several days, Bertilak makes a deal with him: Bertilak will hunt, and Gawain will stay at his castle. Whatever Bertilak gets, he will give to Gawain, and Gawain will give whatever

he gets to Bertilak. On the first day, Bertilak catches a deer (*Hunt Day 1*) and Gawain receives one kiss from Lilith (*The Knight's Wife's Dance Day 1*). On the second day, Bertilak catches a boar (*Hunt Day 2*) and Gawain receives two kisses from Lilith (*The Knight's Wife's Dance Day 2*). On the third day, Bertilak catches a fox (*Hunt Day 3*) and Gawain receives three kisses and a scarf from Lilith (*The Hunt of the Knight's Wife*). Because Lilith told him the scarf will prevent his death, Gawain decides not to hand it over to Bertilak. Gawain and Sam then set out to meet the Green Knight.

Sam and Gawain find the Green Knight. Gawain bares his neck to the Green Knight, who swings three times, holds back twice, and strikes him the third time. Gawain discovers that the Green Knight has only nicked his neck, and then realizes that the Green Knight is actually Bertilak. Lilith and Morgan Le Fay step forward, revealing their involvement in Morgan's plan. Gawain has failed in valuing his life more than his honor, but has triumphed over his lust. Gawain, clutching the green scarf, vows to wear it from then on as a token of his shame (*Symbol of Shame*).

Morgan returns Sam to the future, confident that he has learned his lesson. She watches him as he becomes gainfully employed. Morgan settles down to enjoy her evening, only to read of the antics of another descendant. She rushes off in a fury to repair his virtue (*Great Aunt Reprise*).

Script Analysis

(All un-cited quotes and references are taken from Alysse Parker's script *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: the Musical!*)

1. **Playwright:** Alysse Parker

Based on the 14th Century poem written by an unknown poet. It is one of the most famous King Arthur stories. The story contains many traditional “games” including the beheading game and the trading of gifts game. Some interpret this story as “a representation of the Green Man of folklore and by others as an allusion to Christ” (Wikipedia.org). “What is known today about the poet is largely general. As J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, after reviewing the text's allusions, style, and themes, concluded in 1925: He was a man of serious and devout mind, though not without humour; he had an interest in theology, and some knowledge of it, though an amateur knowledge perhaps, rather than a professional; he had Latin and French and was well enough read in French books, both romantic and instructive; but his home was in the West Midlands of England; so much his language shows, and his meter, and his scenery” (Wikipedia.org).

We are using the translation by Jessie L. Weston (1850-1928). She spent her life as an “independent scholar and folklorist, working mainly on mediaeval Arthurian texts” (Wikipedia.org). She argued that the Arthurian tales had their origins at an earlier time than was commonly believed. Quest of Jessie Weston says “she was a woman and English bedsides, striding confidently into an arena long dominated by German men. That she remained firm and overcame the bias against the woman scholar as fully equal

and productive is evident by the stature attained in her lifetime, the more striking in that she did not have a university behind her” (Grayson 1992).

2. Central Issues:

The main goal is for Gawain and Sam to become better men, so as not to disgrace Morgan le Fey. This revolves around their quest to find and finish their bargain with the Green Knight.

3. Location: England

Act 1

1. Non-specific place, living room
2. Food court at mall/King Arthur’s Court
3. King Arthur’s New Year Feast
4. King Arthur’s court
5. On a country road/Bertilak’s court
6. Hallway? Private room?

Act 2

1. Bertilak’s court
2. Gawain’s bedroom
3. Gawain’s bedroom/hunting forest
4. On the road to Green Chapel

Act 3

1. Green Knight’s castle
2. Green Knight’s castle
3. Food court in modern mall/Morgan’s living room

4. Time Frame:

Winter in approx. 10th century. As there is contention as to when Arthur and his knights lived the styles have more room for interpretation. “Weston had dated the existence of a Gawain legend from the tenth century, but had no proof to show. For Bruce and the others, Gawain was born in Geoffrey of Monmouth's comment that Gawain was a valiant nephew of Arthur. From Geoffrey to Wace, thence to Chretien: "We have no early short episodic poems about Gawain and no evidence that there were any” (Grayson 1992). Also, styles changed very little in this age and there is very little information about it.

Some of the show is also set in the 21st Century, therefore the two fashions will be mixed throughout.

Act 1

1. Non-specific time
2. New Years, 2010/10th century
3. New Years, 10th Century
4. Next year, all-hallows day, fall
5. Months later- Christmas eve
6. Same evening

Act 2

1. Next day, morning? Evening?
2. Later
3. The next three mornings
4. Next day

Act 3

1. Same day, near New Years
2. Same day
3. 2010

5. Characters:

Gawain- Nephew of Morgan and Arthur, ancestor of Sam. He and Sam are apparently very similar. He is a knight of King Arthur's court, but is not well respected. People manipulate him. He is very attracted to Lilith, whereas Sam is frightened of her.

Sam- Descendent of Gawain, Arthur and Morgan. He traveled back in time from the modern day. Therefore, he has no connections in the Medieval period. He is there against his will.

Morgan- Self-centered, and controlling. She is Arthur's sister. Since she is related to Gawain and Sam, she feels it is her duty to interfere with their lives. She is magical and uses it to mess with time.

Lilith- Married to and in love with Bertilak. She and her husband are helping Morgan teach Gawain and Sam a lesson. She seduces Gawain as a trap.

Bertilak- Married to and in love with Lilith, but working with her to help Morgan with Gawain and Sam. He is actually the Green Knight. He is a hunter and the Lord of a castle. He encourages his wife to seduce Gawain as part of their plan.

Green Knight- Bertilak in disguise. He is all green and magical. He has his head chopped off but does not die, then he grows it back on. He is helping Morgan teach Gawain and Sam a lesson. He is supposedly from another world, Avalon.

Arthur- He is the brother of Morgan, Gawain's uncle, and Sam's ancestor. He is the King of England and the head of the legendary Round table. He seems jovial and mostly oblivious to problems. He encourages Gawain to challenge the Green Knight and therefore begins the quest.

6. Pre-story:

It is implied that Morgan has “fixed” the lives of other relatives. Morgan seems to know Bertilak and Lilith well.

7. Roles:

Sam and Gawain are the protagonists, while Morgan, Lilith and Bertilak seem to be the antagonists, however they end up being facilitators for the lessons the leads must learn.

Stereotype characters include:

Food court crowd- Noisy, rude and dirty. Not nice people. All they care about is themselves.

Boy- Typical, bratty highschooler. Isn't concerned for Sam

Arthur- He has a small part and has little character development. He is a jovial, but oblivious character.

Guinevere- non-speaking wife of Arthur. Very feminine and submissive.

King Arthur's court- More friendly than the modern day folks, but unsure of Sam since he behaves oddly.

Man sitting next to Gawain- He and Gawain are unwelcoming, until Morgan tricks them. He is easily offended.

Man at Bertilak's- Friendly, helpful, maybe pompous, believing Bertilak to be famous

Lilith's maids- Non-speaking, demure, obedient

Musician from the pit- acts as a vehicle for the audience's questions

Old Man- frightened peasant. He has no honor as he suggests to Gawain to go back

Back-up singer knight- goofy and over-enthusiastic

Boy in food court- immature and has no shame

Job offer man- over-enthusiastic, like knights, should be played by Arthur

8. Overall Themes:

Finding humility, learning about oneself, honesty, bravery, "honor and integrity make the man."

9. My Themes:

I want to show the merging of the Medieval and the modern worlds. The show tries to demonstrate that they are not really as different as they seem. This can be accomplished with mirroring in the elements from the two worlds and by making the old components look new and vice versa. It will give the whole production a timeless effect and show the power of women, which was uncommon in both King Arthur's and Jessie Weston's time, but which is so prevalent in the story. This can be done by making the women's costumes sharper than the men's.

10. Design Restrictions:

The Green Knight is all green and he has his head chopped off, then he grows it back on.

Sam needs to have modern clothes that can be ripped off by Morgan to reveal Medieval garb.

The chorus needs to be able to switch from modern to Medieval and back while in full view of the audience.

11. Costume/Character References:

Morgan: “the hot, hilarious, brilliant, controlling”, “Where are *you* from? The *Renaissance period?*”

Sam: “*rips off his modern clothing, under which is appropriate clothing for the time period*”

Gawain: “Who is this? (*Picks up a fake TV guide*) Samuel... Lothian... hmmm... he reminds me of someone... (*flips channel, we see Gawain making the same face*) oh yes, Gawain Lothian... those fools”, “I should really get dressed first”, “*helps tie on the scarf around his waist*”, “*A small bit of blood, visible to the audience, is tricking down Gawain’s neck*”

Bertilak: “handsome”

Green Knight: “Good sir, you are completely green, The color of the other-world, Avalon”, “creature of another world”, “*a freaking huge green axe*”, “*the Green Knight’s head rolls onstage*”

Lilith: “*She is beautiful*”, “your radiant beauty”, “*wearing a sexy nightgown*”, “*pulls a ring out of her pocket It is lovely*”, “*her scarf of fine silk*”

Preliminary Drawings

Sir Gawain



Sam



Morgan le Fey



Lord Bertilak



The Green Knight**King Arthur****Lilith**